



PHOTOGRAPHY/DON GRAYSTON

Robert Holly reads vintage News and Yvonne Stroup checks an 1873 Alta Daily Independent.

U. library hunts early newspapers to preserve Utah's recorded past

By JoAnn Jacobsen-Wells
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WANTED: Old newspapers, especially those printed in Utah's early mining and farming communities.

That's the plea of officials at the University of Utah's Marriott Library, who want to collect at least one copy of each of the more than 1,000 different titles of newspapers published at some time in the state.

Dr. Robert P. Holly, assistant director for technical services, said that thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C., the library has the largest collection in the world of Utah newspapers — nearly 500.

Holly said the most valuable single issue is the June 15, 1850, edition of the Deseret News.

This priceless first volume announced the terrible fire in San Francisco, which broke out in the Dennison Exchange. In two hours, nearly \$1 million worth of property was destroyed, including the Parke House.

The fire occurred Dec. 24, 1849.

Holly said because there was no pony express, much less telegraphs and telephones, it took six months for the news of the tragedy to reach Salt Lake City.

The Deseret News, in its first edition, was the first newspaper in the valley to report it.

The library is also preserving two issues of the Alta Daily Independence from 1873, received from North Dakota State University. The director said the paper was only published during the month of May that year.

Other finds range from the Centerville Newsette, a newspaper sent to armed services members from Centerville during World War II to inform them about news back home, to 40 issues of Utah-Nederlander, a Salt Lake Dutch-language paper.

Previously unavailable copies of

the Myton Free Press, Blanding Outlook and San Juan Record have also been located.

Holly said most of the papers have been donated by Utahns, including some 1955 copies of the Magna Times. "They were smelly, but needed," he said.

"The closer we get to the present, the more likely we are to have the newspapers, but that isn't ensured," he said. "We especially need papers from small mining and farming communities that no one bothered to save."

The \$147,000 Utah preservation project was initiated three years ago when the NEH launched efforts to preserve the nation's newspapers as historical resources.

The NEH made grants for various state newspaper projects, including the Marriott-directed effort.

The library was one of the first to finish the nationwide effort. Montana and the Virgin Islands are the only other grant receivers that have completed their projects.

Holly said Utah had a head start compared to other states because the Marriott's librarian in the 1950s, Leonard Kirkpatrick, microfilmed daily and weekly newspaper files.

When the NEH project started, the Marriott had 30 years worth of newspapers — one of the most complete files of newspaper microfilms in the country.

But the library wants more.

Holly said the project "proved a lot of newspapers are lost. Most of the 475 elusive newspapers from which not a single known copy is known remaining were only published for a short time.

"There were a lot of newspapers in the mining communities that had a very short publishing life, and those are the ones, for the most part, that are missing," Holly said.

"But if you look at the total number

of issues published (from all newspapers), rather than the titles published, our collection is not so bad," he said. "However, even though the official project is complete, we're still looking."

Holly challenged Utah residents to search their attics for copies. If they find any, they can contact him at 581-7741.

In the meantime, the U. Library will continue to keep in touch with a large data base, called OCLC, in Columbus, Ohio. There, people can query about newspaper titles and find out who in the country has them. A guide listing what is available will soon be published.

Holly is sure Brigham Young University will get a lot of response from New York.

